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ABSTRACT

Old Order Amish in modern society have retained definite customs and traditions. At the heart of their thinking is the belief that resolving conflicts peacefully within their own cultural group is a necessity. In times of conscription of young men, alternative service in governmental-approved civilian work is performed instead of military service. Types of work approved for the Amish emphasize the national health and safety of humankind in society. Working in hospitals has been an important type of alternative service. (BZ)

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# PEACE, THE OLD ORDER AMISH, AND SOCIETY

by

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PEACE, THE OLD ORDER AMISH, AND SOCIETY

At the present time in United States history, it is of utmost importance to emphasize living together peacefully in order to enjoy and appreciate that which is good, true, and beautiful. Federal monies spent on huge weapons systems which could destroy most or all of the human population on the planet earth is money spent for items other than proper health care, quality schools to educate people, safe roads and highways to transport people and goods, efficient train service, the necessities of life for the unemployed and the unemployable, and a society where crime is at a minimal.

Extravagant budgets for the military make for waste. It pushes super powers to the ultimate to promote its own nationalism and ethnocentrism. The end result may be a catastrophic calamity from which each super power is unwilling to negotiate and unable to work toward peace.

The choice is ours in terms of which direction to go whether it be negotiations and weapons reductions or each super power pushing its own ideology to a point of mass destruction, with or without war as an objective. Spending money on huge weapons systems in and of itself is wasteful, leaving increasingly less funds for domestic spending which can benefit all of society.

## Alternative Service and the Old Order Amish

A central concept of Old Order Amish during times of conscription of young men is alternative service in place of military service. Local draft boards generally cooperate to give these men a classification which emphasizes going into selected types of approved

civilian service instead of being drafted into any branch in the armed services.

There has been a long tradition of not participating in the military for Amish during times of conscription. In fact, Jacob Amman, their first leader, in the later 1600's emphasized conscientious objection to war. The conscience is involved in taking this position. In all wars, the Old Order Amish refuse to participate in the military. Thus, it is not a recent philosophy, nor does it emphasize selected wars in which the Amish do not participate. In all wars at all times, participation in any facet of military service is frowned upon.

Which kind of civilian service do draft age Old Order Amish men perform in times of conscription? Hostettler[1] wrote the following:

> In some cases the Amish were able to have their young men assigned to places where other Amish were working, in agriculture rather than in hospital care, But having their young men exposed to other objectors, liberal Amish and Mennonites, who were highly articulate and persuasive, also was disruptive. The Amish boys maintained their Amish life style, but were frequently unable to articulate it. The problem was somewhat alleviated when local draft boards honored farm deferment requests from the Amish. The Selective Service also honored a plan whereby a conscripted young man could go to another Amish community and serve for two years doing farm work where help was essential.

Thus, instead of military service, Old Order Amish work in hospitals, on farms, and in relief work among refugees overseas.

The Mennonite Encyclopedia[2] contains the following on Civilian Public Service (CPS) which served needs of conscientious objectors during World War II:

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[1] John A. Hostetler, Amish Society. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980, page 269.

[2] The Mennonite Encyclopedia. Newton, Kansas: Mennonite Publication Office, 1955, pages 606 and 607.

This first Mennonite camp was established to engage in soil conservation. Before the end of CPS, eleven soil conservation camps scattered from Maryland to Idaho had been or were being operated by the Mennonite Central Committee, acting for the Mennonites of the United States. Early in the CPS program, it was assumed that since farming was the leading profession among Mennonites, most of the draft men would prefer this kind of service. When an increasing number of men came from nonfarm backgrounds, other types of work were opened so that by September 1945 only 19 percent of the Mennonite men were in soil conservation. An equal number, however, were engaged in other forms of agricultural service, including dairy units.

A second type of work was that done under the direction of the United States Forest Service. ... Although the major purpose of the western camps was to prevent or stop forest fires, much time was spent in building forest trails, caring for nursery stock, and engaging in pest control. One of the most spectacular services was that of the parachute jumpers who were trained to parachute to the scene of a forest fire there to engage in the usual fire-fighting techiniques.

... The two camps under the Bureau of Reclamation worked on the construction of dams and a third camp divided its work between this Bureau and the Farm Security Administration, developing an irrigation project in the Yellowstone River Valley.

Other service in the field of agriculture was performed in small units such as the one at the Nebraska Agricultural Experiment Station. A CPS Reserve was made up of men who acted as livestock attendants on boats of cattle and horses sent to Europe. In May 1942 the first group of men from a Mennonite camp to serve in a dairy unit were placed in Wisconsin. By August 1945 the Mennonites had over 550 men in dairy work, among whom were a considerable number engaged in dairy herd testing.

Of an entirely different nature was work in the dangerously undermanned mental hospitals and training schools. In August 1942 the first men from a Mennonite camp to work in a state mental hospital arrived at Western State Hospital (q.v.), Staunton, Va. By December 1945 more than 1,500 men had served in mental hospital units under MCC administration. Other men served under the United States Public Health in Florida and Mississippi where the work centered around hookworm control. A unit in Puerto Rico spent part of its time working with the same problem. Receiving much publicity were the "guinea pig" units, in which men working under the Office of Scientific Research and Development subjected themselves to various experiments designed to gain information having to do with nutrition and disease.

During World War II, Old Order Amish young men were conscripted

into camps together with other Mennonite men. These Mennonite groups included The General Conference, The Mennonite Brethern, Old Mennonites, Conservative Amish, and Beachy Amish, among others.

During the Korean conflict, drafted Mennonite men of different sects also worked as conscientious objectors in approved civilian types of services. They were paid a nominal amount for their services to take care of room, board, clothing, and vital incidentals. The writer, not an Old Order Amish, was in the Hashemite Kingdom of the Jordan for two years with the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) teaching school and assisting in clothing distributions to Palestinian refugees. In the United States CO's worked in general hospitals, mental hospitals, Mennonite colleges as maintenace workers, and disaster work cleanup following tornados, hurricanes, as well as other natural disasters.

Being a male conscientious objector (CO) at a young age, such as ages 13 and 14 can be very uncomfortable and unpopular when a popular war is going on. The larger society, such as during World War II, were highly supportive of this conflict. Society as a whole, may then perceive CO's as being;

1. cowardly in that they are afraid of combat and death.
2. unworthy to live in the United States due to not supporting war efforts directly.
3. disloyal to the United States.
4. less than human and not deserving to own farm land and property in general.
5. favorable to the Nazi cause.

The writer during his seventh and eigth years (1940-1942) attended a five teacher rural school. There were three predraft age boys known to be CO's because their parents were Mennonites. The other boys called the three;

1. yellow bellied bastards.
2. god damn CO's.

Forced wrestling in a punitive way was also a punishment to these professed CO's. CO's were not to protect themselves.

Then in high school (1942-1946), similar tactics and approaches were utilized in dealing with CO's. The writer rarely has mentioned he was a CO to the larger society. He is proud of having been a CO, but the consequences had been highly unfavorable from the larger society. The writer should now state, as a result of these experiences, the word CO is almost taboo. He talks about alternative service instead. Alternative service sounds respectable and sophisticatec. During the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts, the latter in particular, alternative service was viewed more sympathetically by society as compared to World War II. It might have even been a positive sign to be in alternative, rather than military service, during the Vietnamese conflict.

It appears that Vietnamese veterans served in a conflict viewed as being negative. These servicemen were almost received as being "abnormal" when returning to civilian life. Thus, every attention must be given for all in society to have status, food, clothing, and shelter needs met. But above all, each person must have security, feel wanted, and develop feelings of achievement. Living peacefully becomes a major goal among members in world society. If conflicts are not resolved between and among nations, money and effort goes into destruction, rather than constructive endeavors. Constructive endeavors are;

1. quality education so each can achieve optimally.
2. appropriate health care for each. With proper health, goal attainment is possible.
3. adequate nutrition, housing, and clothing. Otherwise, one may worry about physiological needs, rather than achieve, accomplish, and attain.

4. Acceptance of all people regardless of race, creed, and beliefs.

Destructive endeavors are in evidence when money and efforts go in opposite directions of meeting human needs. When federal, state, and local governments cut funds going into constructive endeavors, persons individually are hurt whether in education, health care, nutrition, or other needs. Meeting needs of people develops a work force whereby each may attain more optimally in developing democracy as a concept more fully within a nation.

Meeting needs of people should be the goal of any nation. It should not be viewed as being socialistic or communistic. Sometimes, groups in society want to label federal, state, and local endeavors in meeting human needs as being "socialistic" and "communistic". Labels can be very destructive. Humaness and conflict resolutions, rather than continual increased military spending and continued threats made against enemies regardless of the nation(s) involved, should be in vogue.

## Philosophy of the Old Order Amish

Traditions, not modernism, is a key concept in Amish thought. New farm machines, innovative thinking in home life, as well as creative ideas in religion, are frowned upon. Custom and attempts to maintain the status quo are the ideal. Being removed from urban and suburban areas are to be prized. Rural values and beliefs as interpreted by the Old Order Amish represent that which is worthwhile.

Tradition is reflected with the utilization of horse drawn farm machinery rather than tractors with power steering and brakes, an air-conditioned cab, and a hydraulic lift. Horses and buggies used to

transport people and goods are emphasized as compared to cars with air-conditioning, power steering, and power brakes. Amish houses do not have electricity. Thus, no electric ranges, hot water heaters, dishwashers, television sets, or radios. Centralized heating is not in evidence in Amish houses. Electrical appliances and products are definitely not wanted in Amish homes. Maintaining what is in Amish society is desired rather that what society stresses as being important.

Religious services are held in houses of Amish rather than in church buildings. "God does not dwell in a building built by human hands." The bishop, or one of two ministers gives the message in preaching services. Preaching services are held every other week and not weekly. There, are no decorative items for church services, not even a cross. Simplicity, not ornateness is emphasized in religious services conducted in the German language. Old Order Amish first come to what is now the United States in 1732 from Prussia (Germany). Traditional religious services over the years have not minimized the importance of German church services, while Pennsylvania Dutch is the language of the home. English is the language used to transact business in the larger society in buying and selling goods and services.

An ethnic group differs from the majority in society in terms of customs, values, beliefs, language, and nationality. The Old Order Amish are a minority group and an ethnic group living in American society.

Conscience is highly significant when studying the Old Order Amish. This is true of non-participation in any and all wars. But

also in other facets of Amish life is conscience a vital factor in choices and decisions made. For example, if a new city limit ordinance includes farm land owned by Amish church members, they may move to another state to avoid laws which say indoor bathroom facilities are a must. This is true if members of a congregation vote it wrong to have indoor plumbing. Not all Amish congregations are opposed to indoor toilets, however. Amish may move to a different state if the local state requires orange-colored triangles on the rear of buggies pulled by horses. Amish have also rejected the use of licensed teachers to teach their children in their own parochial schools. In 1972, the United States Supreme Court ruled that Old Order Amish with eighth grade terminal education could legally teach children from their own congregation(s). Numerous states make exceptions for the Old Order Amish when their religious beliefs clash with the laws of the land.

Old Order Amish believe in informal, rather than formal means of disciplining their members. Formal means emphasize the use of policemen, sheriffs judges, attorneys, juries, and the legal system. Informal means of control emphasize the bishop, the two ministers, and the deacon regulating and working out disagreements between individuals and families of their own faith. The deacon, in particular, with instruction from the bishop, work in the direction of harmonizing disputes among church members.

Biblical beliefs receive high priority in Old Order Amish philosophy. Generally, whatever is done can be justified in literal understanding of the Bible. Not taking part in military service in any war is justified with content in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew

5:43-47).

> 43 Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy:
> 44 But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
> 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
> 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
> 47 And if ye salute your brethern only, what do ye more then others? do not even the publicans so?

Old Order Amish are forbidden to swear verbally or on legal documents. Amish then are permitted to affirm, rather than swear, on legal documents: The Biblical basis here is found in Matthew 5:33-37 which states:

> 33 Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not for-swear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
> 34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
> 35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
> 36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
> 37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; for Whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

Not using formal means or legal methods of control of human beings is advocated in Matthew 5:38-42 with the following direct quote from the Bible:

> 38 Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
> 39 But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whatsoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
> 40 And it any man will sue thee at the law, and take away they coat, let him have thy cloak also.

41 And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
42 Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Old Order Amish base their acts and deeds on literal acceptance of the Bible. Amish children in parochial schools study the fourth r (religion) as well as the 3r's (reading, writing, and arithmetic). The school environment is not separated, but rather integrated with a study of the Bible and Biblical stories.

## In Closing

Old Order Amish in society have definite customs and traditions. At the heart of their thinking is resolving conflicts peacefully within their own cultural group. In times of conscription of young men, alternative service in governmental approved civilian work is performed rather than military service. Approved kinds of work emkphasizes the national health and safety of humankind in society. Working in hospitals, in particular, has been an important type of alternative service.

Regardless of the time of year, Old Order Amish have a tremendous reputation in helping others who have experienced natural disasters. Storms, cyclones, and hurricanes take their toll each year in the United States. Old Order Amish help alleviate human suffering in society. Regardless of who is affected by these natural disasters, Old Order Amish help cleanup and rebuild without charges for services performed.

[3]

The Mennonite Weekly Review contained the following article pertaining to Old Order Amishmen building a non-Amish farmers barn destroyed by a hurricane:

At day's end Clyde and Ruth Penrod were plainly bewildered by what they had seen. A new barn-36 feet wide and 66 feet long like the old one-stood tall and sturdy where there had been nothing 12 hours earlier.

OFFERING TO PAY, of course, was out of the question. The Penrods weren't even sure how effusive their thanks ought to be. "These people do this kind of thing almost instinctively," he says. "It's just the way they live. It probably never occurred to them not to put up my barn."

He was pleased, naturally, and grateful. That showed on his face as plainly as the look of disbelief he had worn all day as his new barn rose from the concrete block foundation that had protected him and his wife.

But there was one thing he did not feel, and he expressed it as the last of the black buggies headed up his lane. "I'm not surprised," he said, "Not at all."

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3 Mennonite Weekly Review, June 27, 1985, page 8.